

A SUNBATHING GIRL

keeps getting up to rearrange her gear. She stands her bike at her feet, then at her head. She points it toward the boat-house, then away. She moves her bundle of street-clothes from the seat, to the front basket, to both rear baskets in turn. She bundles and rebundles, ties and re-ties, each movement meticulous, fitting her face and figure -- not so pretty as well-kept.

I assume she plans an escape, each movement paring all-important instants.

It's possible she's just fidgety, that the sun overheats her, or her blanket chafes. But I'd bet she's preparing an escape.

It's the only sane thing to do. Though of course there is no escape. Though of course she must keep trying.

A PAIR OF BEATLE-BOOTS

had been sitting in a guy's closet for years. Square toes and natural finish were in. Pointed toes and mirror-shines were out. Even though he still liked them best.

"The main function of clothes is to impress other people," he explained once when he was cleaning out his closet and couldn't avoid the boots' eyes (most likely sunlight on patent leather). "In business you don't express yourself, you express what others want to see."

"And nobody wants to see a pimp," he added, sorry to be so harsh. But times change, truth was truth, the boots had best get used to it.

But they didn't. Not one bit. Whenever he passed their closet they squealed "Play us or trade us. Play us or trade us." He heard them squealing even after he should have been out of earshot.

"Thank me, I'm giving you away," he barged in one day muttering, scooping the boots like kittens into a paper sack.

"Where to? Where to?" they squealed.

"Goodwill." He refused to note the fear in their voices.

He sped to the dump, parked, swore at the drizzle, grabbed the sack, stepped out, flung it as far as he could, jumped back in his car and peeled out -- a 15-foot strip, better than he'd ever laid in highschool.

He felt sick. He'd truly thought he'd be a free-wheeling, money-and-women-dripping, gleaming-footed rock god.

His car ploughed faithfully forward. 22 minutes of lunch-hour left. He'd be back in 20. All he had to do was sit, the squeals diluting in the rain-soaked miles.